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COMMEMORATIVE OF

GENERAL PHILIP H. SHERIDAN,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE LEGISLATURE OF NEW YORK,
AT THE CITY OF ALBANY, APRIL 9, 1889,

BY

WAGER SWAYNE.

STATE OF NEW YORK (SENATE).

IN ASSEMBLY,
ALBANY, January 10, 1889. }

By MR. CURTIS:

WHEREAS, Philip Henry Sheridan, a native of the State of New York, General commanding the armies of the United States, recently died; and

WHEREAS, It is eminently fitting for the Legislature to take formal action to give expression to the high estimate in which his services are held, and the affectionate regard with which his memory is cherished by all the people, and to the end that there shall be set before the youth the native qualities, the professional education, the self-training and discipline by which one of the most distinguished military captains of the age was formed, an officer who, passing through every grade of the military service, was a skillful tactician, organizer and leader of battalions, a commander in the field whose inspiring magnetism filled weary limbs with the unchilled vigor of youth, and fainting hearts with the glow and determination of seizing victory in the decisive charge; therefore be it

Resolved (if the Senate concur), That a joint committee of five Senators and nine Members of Assembly be appointed by the presiding officers of the respective houses to arrange for fitting joint memorial services in commemoration of the patriotic citizen and illustrious soldier, Philip Henry Sheridan.

The foregoing resolution was duly adopted, and Mr. SPEAKER appointed as such committee, on the part of the House, Messrs. Curtis, Batcheller, Saxton, Ainsworth, Moffit, Mead, Martin, Longley and Creamer.

By order of the Assembly,

C. A. CHICKERING,
Clerk.

Said resolution was unanimously adopted, and the PRESIDENT appointed as such committee, on the part of the Senate, Senators Vedder, Murphy, O'Connor, Worth and Kellogg.

WASHINGTON, April 1st, 1889.

GENERAL N. M. CURTIS,

*Chairman Joint Committee N. Y. Legislature on Sheridan
Memorial Services,*

Albany, N. Y.

GENERAL :

Through the courtesy of your Committee I am in receipt of your invitation for myself and children to attend the services to be held by the Legislature of New York in memory of my husband, the late General Sheridan, at Albany, April 9th. It is with extreme regret that I am obliged to say we cannot be present; illness in my family preventing all possibility of our taking the journey to Albany. In our absence, however, I am sure the memorial services will be none the less impressive and sincere, so in advance of the occasion the widow and children of General Sheridan would be greatly indebted to you, General, should you at an appropriate time, convey to the Legislature their deepest gratitude for this official and sacred recognition of the career of one whose entire life was devoted to his country's welfare.

With great respect, I am

Truly yours,

MRS. PHILIP H. SHERIDAN.

SHERIDAN.

There's one we love to call our own,
Renowned by sword and pen,
His plume alone, where e'er it shone,
Was worth ten thousand men;
'Twas he, snatched victory from defeat,
Our hearts' commander still;
When e'er we meet, his name we'll greet,
Our matchless Little Phil.

[*Col. Archie Hopkins.*]

The breaking out of the Rebellion found Sheridan a First-Lieutenant of Infantry, stationed at Yamhill, Oregon—then distant two months journey from the field of war.

Of his situation there he says :

“ We received our mail at Yamhill once a week ; on the day that our courier or messenger was expected, * * * I would go out early in the morning to a commanding point * * * and there I would watch with anxiety for his coming, longing for good news ; for, isolated as I had been through years spent in the wilderness, my patriotism was untainted by politics, nor had it been disturbed by any discussions of the questions out of which the war grew, and I hoped for the success of the Government before all other considerations, I * * * out of a sincere desire to contribute as much as I could to the preservation of the Union, I earnestly wished to be at the seat of war, * * * I was young, healthy and insensible to fatigue, and desired opportunity, but high rank was so distant in our service that not a dream of its attainment had flitted through my brain.”

His first assignment to command of troops was May 25, 1862, when he was appointed Colonel of the 2d

Michigan Cavalry, then stationed at Corinth, Mississippi. His earlier service, since he was brought East the September previous, had been as Commissary and as Quartermaster. He was at Corinth at the time of his appointment, having been with Halleck's army in its movement to that place from Pittsburg Landing, a movement which had occupied the previous six weeks.

The army which made this advance comprised nearly one hundred thousand men. The place in it assigned to Sheridan was as Staff Quartermaster—to remove the headquarters when directed—and as Staff Commissary, to provide the escort with rations and the officers with supplies.

The idea of Sheridan there, assigned to no duty but the care of General Halleck's headquarters, is suggestive of strange contrast. It was this same Sheridan—desiring opportunity, but not dreaming of high command—to whom Mr. Lincoln wrote, within the next three years :—

“ For the personal gallantry, military skill, and just confidence in the courage and patriotism of your troops, displayed by you on the 19th day of October, at Cedar Run, whereby, under the blessing of Providence, your routed army was reorganized, a great National disaster averted, and a brilliant victory achieved over the rebels, for the third time within thirty days, Philip H. Sheridan is appointed a Major-General in the Regular Army.”

He was again in the far West and crossing the plains with an escort, when a courier brought him word that the President had nominated him to be Lieutenant-General. He read the dispatch, and turning to his Staff Officers said : “ Boys, you will have to address

me as Lieutenant-General, now ! ” Their hats all went up at once.

He lay on his death-bed : when word came to him that the Congress of the United States—reviving in his honor the discontinued grade of General of the Army—had crowned him with the last reserve of military rank.

After deducting for all happy accident, the fact remains that of two millions of men, culled from a people who abounded in every quality of excellence, called into the field from the North, three men, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan, beyond all others, made themselves admired and dear to the armies and the people of the nation. Comparison between these is not simply inappropriate ; it is not merely impracticable ; it is arrested on the threshold by the common ties and strong affection of the three which come in to remind us that invidious preferences between them are precisely what he who survives of them would most dislike, and that in this he shares the feeling, as he does the glory, of the dead. The voice of the people is, Grant, Sherman, Sheridan. It is the voice of the people, and it is enough.

The youngest of these three, latest in prominent command, so met and dealt with the emergencies of war that neither mistake nor quarrel or defeat ever wasted the forces of his country or impeded the zeal of their employment. Nature had given him the qualities essential to a selfish excellence. He added to them such as to win affection and command respect. The personal ascendancy resulting made his whole command only himself enlarged, and where he willed it went with all his will, and did what in their place he would have done. This made his personality, of course, as great

as the command at any time entrusted to him, and made his military service a distinct and priceless contribution to the welfare of the country.

It is the lesson of this life that we are here to learn. He was born here in Albany March 6th, 1831. Because of this fact, and because of the high estimate in which his services are held, and the affectionate regard with which his memory is cherished, the People of the State of New York, represented by their Senate and Assembly, with the approving and concurring presence of their Governor and their Appellate Judges, are here with us, and are here, as the resolution controlling me states, to the end that his memory be honored, and his qualities—their education and discipline, their operation and value—be set before the youth; the man himself revived in their remembrance and our own.

The lesson begins early. At fourteen years, he was clerk in a country store in a village in Ohio. His services were in demand; and his leisure was made to yield increase of intelligence. Twice in two years he was promoted to a different master, and to double wages.

The strongest interest of that day was the existing war with Mexico. It was of doubtful right and consequence, and the secluded people of a country village had time to discuss it warmly. They often referred their disputes to the best authority at hand, the boy not yet of sixteen years, who was already bookkeeper of an extensive store.

Directly from this situation may be traced, with growing plainness, those things in him, and their growth also, which gave him victory in the utmost exigencies

of his later life and made him equal to its broadest scope.

The situation in itself was not uncommon for a youth, nor the things done in it beyond the reach of ordinary powers. Emerson, however, says somewhere, that if one does things well, though his home be in a wilderness, a beaten path will bye and bye be trodden to his door.

A little village in Ohio is not a conspicuous arena for well-doing, nor are the duties of a country store of a heroic character ; yet what Sheridan did in that store and the life he led in that village did both lead the way and make the way for all his subsequent achievements. He was without influence or social standing, yet his own mere letter to his Congressman brought back by return mail an appointment to West Point for the youth whose qualities were known. It was these qualities, in turn, which made at once the man and his career.

The qualities themselves arose and grew out of his sympathy with every part of any life with which he was concerned. Again and again throughout his life this shows itself in great things and in small, a sympathy too strong to rest in contemplation, too faithful to abide with the unreal, and too earnest to stop short of the last attainable result.

In the country store at Somerset he cared enough for his work to do it in a way that made his services competed for. He cared enough for his country to study its history with care. Its war with Mexico aroused his interest till his sole wish, as he writes, was to become a soldier, and this sent him to West Point.

Probably this expresses the whole situation. He

was not straining after what he might some day become, he was simply intent upon what he might do now. He did not enter West Point or commence duty with his company, looking upon either as a mere staging from which to build. Each was to him a story to be built, and for the time worthy of exclusive care. Probably it was this absorption in the things at hand that made the things at hand of such absorbing interest to him.

His earliest military service was with a company of infantry upon the Rio Grande. That country was unsettled and almost unknown, and filled with Indians and wild animals. Its newness appealed to him, and his responsive interest led him to make maps of it in all directions. The Indians spoke a different language from his own ; they interested him enough to make him learn that language. The presence of game invited him to hunt, and hunting interested him enough to make him the purveyor of fresh meat for the command ; not stopping with the mere pursuit of game, but learning all their habits and the ways of taking them ; even the colors of the birds became the subject of keen study, until crowded out by graver matters. The novelty of winter quarters sent him thirty miles across the prairies with a wagon to fetch poles to build a hut with fireplace and chimney, though exposure to the weather was habitual with him ; and, above all things, his interest in the men whom he commanded made him, from first to last, their faithful and devoted servant, although none the less their absolute commander.

"Sympathy," says Fichte, "is the secret of all insight ;" and again and again this sympathy and insight crowned the faithfulness of Sheridan with glory and success. It is worth while to trace it in the way

he speaks of his relations with the men, and notice how his heart was with them always, and their hearts, in turn, were his ; and out of this came that which made him Sheridan.

In Oregon he was for many months in charge of a detachment of dragoons, and of these men he writes :

“ When I relieved Hood—a dragoon officer of their own regiment—they did not like the change, and I understood that they somewhat contemptuously expressed this in more ways than one, in order to try the temper of the new “ Leftenant,” but appreciative and unremitting care, together with firm and just discipline, soon quieted all symptoms of dissatisfaction and overcame all prejudice. The detachment had been made up of details from the different companies of the regiment in order to give Williamson a mounted force, and as it was usual, under such circumstance for every company commander to shove into the detail he was called upon to furnish the most troublesome and insubordinate individuals of his company, I had some difficulty, when first taking command, in controlling such a medley of recalcitrants ; but by forethought for them and their wants, and a strict watchfulness for their rights and comfort, I was able in a short time to make them obedient and the detachment cohesive. In the past year they had made long and tiresome marches, forded swift mountain streams, constructed rafts of logs or bundles of dry reeds to ferry our baggage, swum deep rivers, marched on foot to save their worn out and exhausted animals, climbed mountains, fought Indians, and in all and everything had done the best they could for the service and their commander. The disaffected feeling they entertained when I first assumed command soon wore away, and in its place came a confidence and respect which it gives me the greatest pleasure to remember, for small though it was this was my first cavalry command. They little thought, when we were in the mountains of California and Oregon, nor did I myself then dream that but a few years were to elapse before it would be my lot again to command dragoons, this time in numbers so vast as of themselves to compose almost an army.”

In the same spirit with these remarks he writes of that Michigan regiment which was his first command in the war :

“ Although but a few days had elapsed from the date of my appointment as Colonel of the Second Michigan to that of my succeeding to the command of the brigade, I believe I can say with propriety that I had firmly established myself in the confidence of the officers and men of the regiment, and won their regard by thoughtful care. I had striven unceasingly to have them well fed and well clothed, had personally looked after the selection of their camps, and had maintained such a discipline as to allay former irritation.

“ Men who march, scout and fight, and suffer all the hardships that fall to the lot of soldiers in the field, in order to do vigorous work must have the best bodily sustenance, and every comfort that can be provided. I knew from practical experience on the frontier that my efforts in this direction would not only be appreciated, but requited by personal affection and gratitude ; and further that such exertions would bring the best results to me. Whenever my authority would permit I saved my command from needless sacrifices and unnecessary toil ; therefore, when hard or daring work was to be done I expected the heartiest response, and always got it. Soldiers are averse to seeing their comrades killed without compensating results, and none realize more quickly than they the blundering that often takes place on the field of battle. They want some tangible indemnity for the loss of life, and as victory is an offset the value of which is manifest, it not only makes them content to shed their blood, but also furnishes evidence of capacity in those who command them. My regiment had lost very few men since coming under my command, but it seemed, in the eyes of all who belonged to it, that casualties to the enemy and some slight successes for us had repaid every sacrifice, and in consequence I had gained not only their confidence as soldiers, but also their esteem and love as men, and to a degree far beyond what I then realized.”

When he was ordered from the West to the Army of the Potomac his whole command was gathered on the

hillside to bid him a last adieu as his train took its departure. He himself tells us why this was :

“In Kentucky, nearly two years, before my lot had been cast with about half of the twenty-five regiments of infantry that I was just leaving, the rest joining me after Chickamauga. It was practically a new arm of the service to me, for although I was an infantry officer, yet the only large command which up to that time I had controlled was composed of cavalry, and most of my experience had been gained in this arm of the service. I had to study hard to be able to master all the needs of such a force, to feed and clothe it and guard all its interests. When undertaking these responsibilities I felt that if I met them faithfully recompense would surely come through the hearty response that soldiers always make to conscientious exertion on the part of their superiors, and not only that more could be gained in that way than from the use of any species of influence, but that the reward would be quicker. Therefore, I always tried to look after their comfort personally, selected their camps and provided abundantly for their subsistence, and the road they opened for me shows that my work was not in vain.”

So of the termination of that famous ride from Winchester to Cedar Creek he says :

“At Mill Creek my escort fell in behind and we were going ahead at a regular pace, when just as we made the crest of the rise beyond the stream, there burst upon our view the appalling spectacle of a panic-stricken army. * * * My first thought was to stop the army in the suburbs of Winchester as it came back, form a new line and fight there ; but as the situation was more maturely considered, a better conception prevailed. I was sure the troops had confidence in me, for heretofore we had been successful ; and as at other times they had seen me present at the slightest sign of trouble or distress, I felt I ought now to try to restore their broken ranks, or, failing in that to share their fate because of what they had done hitherto.”

In September, 1886, in a little speech made at a

soldiers' reunion, held at Creston, Iowa, he expressed more plainly than ever his own view of his relation to the men of his command :

"I want to say to you, comrades, this, that I am indebted to the private soldier for all of this credit that has come to me. He is the man who did the fighting, and the man who carried the musket is the greatest hero of the war, in my opinion. I was nothing but an agent. I knew how to take care of men, I knew what a soldier was worth, and I knew how to study the country so as to put him in the right. I knew how to put him in a battle when one occurred, but I was simply the agent to take care of him; he did the work. Now, comrades, these are common sense things, and I can't say them in very flowing language, but they are true nevertheless, and they are true not of me alone, but of everybody else. It is to the common soldier that we are indebted for any credit that came to us. * * * There are many men here to-day who served in the field with me, and it is a great pleasure to me to find them out, and they have been very kindly in their remarks to me. While they were with me, I certainly did all I could for them. I often laid awake planning for their welfare, and I never killed a man unnecessarily. You may kill as many men as you choose, if you give them an equivalent for the loss. Men do not like to be killed for nothing. They do not like to have their heads rammed against a stone wall, unless for some good result. * * * Whenever I took men into battle, I gave them victory as the result of the engagement, and that was always satisfactory."

Is it any wonder that General Grant wrote of this man :

"As a commander of troops, as a man capable of doing all that is possible with any number of men, there is no man living greater than Sheridan. I rank him with Napoleon and the great captains of history. He had a magnetic quality of swaying men which I wish I had."

Once only he is known to have stopped to ask if that

which must be done must needs be done at once. On the eve of that grand review at Washington with which the war was closed, he was ordered to start for Texas. That meant that he should never lead his old command again. There was no help for it, and he left the capital two days before the grand review.

In the same way his familiar interest in men made him unerring in the choice of scouts.

He says of himself, when ordered from Corinth to Louisville to join Buell's army :

“ Before and during the activity which followed his reinstatement General Grant had become familiar with my services through the transmission to Washington of information I had furnished concerning the enemy's movements, and by reading reports of my fights and skirmishes in front, and he seemed loth to let me go.”

The following, written of him at a later date, doubtless expresses the view of General Grant :

“ His scouts were famous throughout the army, and their information was exact ; it was always relied upon by Grant as absolute, and it never deceived him.”

The result of this was, that whoever fought him must do so without any concealment of the force about to be employed or of the time and manner of attack.

His dealings with these men were in sympathetic interest not unlike his dealings with his troops, and their intrepid faithfulness was his reward.

After the war, in his smaller commands the same solicitude for his men is continued, and with the same result. In December, 1868, from his camp out on the plains, he wrote to General Sherman :

“ We have had fearful storms, for a day or two, with

snow. Some of the men burned out their boots during the cold weather and *substituted nose-bags*. When the trains come in we will have shoes for them. The command is in high spirits and enthusiastic ; everybody in good humor and jolly.

"Please tell Tommy I have a small-sized Indian pony for him which I hope to get in. He is a buster, and very gentle."

He wrote to General Sherman, also, when the latter was just starting off for Europe, in November, 1871 :

"If you can occasionally drop me a line it will give me so much pleasure. * * * I will stick close to my duties here and will endeavor to make things go straight enough to give you no uneasiness so far as I am concerned."

General Pope also lately wrote of him :

"In 1870 I was brought into intimate official and personal relations with him, which lasted without interruption for fourteen years. * * * I am glad to say that the close friendship and intimacy which marked our association almost from the beginning remained unimpaired to the day of his death. In his private life he was as simple as a child, and found the happiest part of it in his home with his delightful wife and children, whom he loved with an unusual tenderness. He was hospitable to a degree, and his house was always a resort of his army friends, and indeed of anybody who knew him. Naturally he was a man of strong feelings and convictions ; and I suppose he thought himself capable of equally strong hatred, but although I have known him to say severe things about individual people, I do not believe he ever cherished animosity toward any human being. Towards the officers and soldiers under his command he was always kind and considerate, and to their comfort and welfare always alive. He could always be relied on to sustain his subordinates in any well-meant action, even against the highest officials of the Government ; and his troops had that confidence in him and reliance on him which is half the battle in the administration of a great military command. There never was a commander more popular, nor one that has been more regretted. In any of

the great kingdoms of Europe, with the constant opportunities they offer for military careers, Sheridan would have been a foremost figure in the military hierarchy of the world."

If this all-pervading sympathy and its reciprocal good-will, with their abundant fruit, had been the unimpeded course of a strong nature that was nothing but congenial, we should have to class that nature as partaking of the supernatural, and should find less in it to encourage youth or quicken men. The truth is opposite to this. The boy was a natural boy, full of strong impulse, often uncontrolled. The wife of General Sherman had her early education in a convent nearly across the street from the house in which the schoolboy Sheridan lived. She often spoke of the two little boys, his brother and himself, whose pranks she vividly remembered. He tells us himself he was familiar with the game called "playing hookey," and that the incidental aspects of that fascinating occupation were not absent from his case.

There must have been a struggle when these things gave way before the sturdy industry that won increase of wages in the store and the bookkeeper's faithful accuracy.

His stay at West Point showed again what he had in his nature to contend with. A fellow-cadet in the course of duty gave him an affront. He started at once to *bayonet* the offender. Self-control came in time to prevent this, but had not force enough to keep him from attacking with his fists. This cost him nine months' suspension and postponed his graduation for a year.

In pleasant contrast with this last, it may be told

that in his later life, at Washington, at the headquarters of the Army, there hung up in his private room a portrait of himself, which his wife did not admire. He declined to reconsider his conclusion to send that picture to an exhibition in New York, to which he had been asked to send a portrait of himself. It was at breakfast the matter came up, and was disposed of with a word or two. That morning Mrs. Sheridan rode with the General to headquarters to "do a little shopping" in the neighborhood. She shopped for a little black paint, and the General being at that hour elsewhere, she had the picture taken down, and painted out the face. Telling the horrified attendant simply to say that she had done it, she finished up her shopping. Dinner passed cheerfully without the slightest reference to the occurrence. Nor was it ever mentioned afterwards, except that four years later, in discussing some paintings, the General remarked, with a twinkle in his eye, "By the way, Irene, you are something of a painter yourself?"

The army opposed to Halleck's march on Corinth was known to be not more than half as large as his own. There was never any serious resistance, and Corinth when reached was found empty. The distance traversed was only twenty miles over a country not unfavorable, yet this one hundred thousand men "consumed," as Sherman says, "all of the month of May, the most beautiful and valuable month of the year for campaigning in this latitude; we fortified almost every camp at night, although we had encountered no opposition except from cavalry, which gave ground easily as we advanced."

The over caution and snail's pace of this advance

galled even the private soldiers of that army, and evoked both ridicule and criticism ; but Sheridan has no complaint to make.

He writes :

“ My stay at General Halleck’s headquarters was exceedingly agreeable, and my personal intercourse with officers on duty there was not only pleasant and instructive, but offered opportunities of instruction and advancement for which hardly any other post could have afforded like chances. My special duties did not occupy all my time, and whenever possible I used to go over to General Sherman’s division, which held the extreme right of our line in the advance on Corinth, to witness the little engagements occurring there continuously during the slow progress which the army was then making, the enemy being forced back but a short distance each day.”

Within the next three months this industrious infantry captain had with eight hundred cavalry defeated six times their number, and with that introduction ushered in his crowd of victories.

It was he also of whom General Grant wrote :

“ he, in fifteen days, passed entirely round Lee’s army ; encountered his cavalry in four engagements and defeated him in all ; recaptured four hundred Union prisoners and killed and captured many of the enemy ; destroyed and used many supplies and munitions of war, destroyed miles of railroad and telegraph, and freed us from annoyances by the cavalry of the enemy for more than two weeks.”

His first fight was at Booneville, Mississippi, where he was on outpost duty with two regiments of cavalry, eight hundred and twenty-seven (827) men. The cavalry force which attacked him were between five and six thousand. A few hours later they were scattered, leaving him master of the field.

It was after this single battle that Rosecrans and his

other superior officers applied at once for his promotion, saying over their signatures that he was "worth his weight in gold."

His weight, by the way, was scarcely enough for a woman. He speaks of himself as he stood before the Secretary of War, when he came East to join the Army of the Potomac: "I was rather young in appearance, "looking even under rather than over thirty-three years "—but five feet five inches in height, and weighing only "one hundred and fifteen pounds."

His body however, was, so long that when on horseback he presented the appearance of a man six feet two.

His head, also, was of such a shape that the ease with which his hat came off had given him the habit of frequently riding with it in his hand, and so of using it for gesture on occasion.

It was not, however, merely for the fight at Booneville that promotion came to him immediately. Their recommendation says:

"His Ripley expedition has brought us captured letters of immense value, as well as prisoners, showing the rebel plans and dispositions, as you will learn from District Commanders."

We have seen already how upon the plains he was the hunter and geographer of the command. "It always came rather easy to me," he writes, "to learn the geography of a new section, and its important topographical features as well." "As soon as possible," he writes of himself at Booneville, "I compiled for the use of myself and my regimental commanders an information map of the surrounding country. This map exhibited such detail as country

“ roads, streams, farm houses, fields, woods and swamps, “ and such other topographical features as would be “ useful.”

How vast the service which this habit rendered afterwards to the country and himself is seen in his report to the Committee on the conduct of the war.

“ After careful study of the topography of the country from the Rapidan to Richmond, which is of thickly wooded character, its numerous and almost parallel streams nearly all uniting, forming the York River, I took up the idea that our cavalry ought to fight the enemy’s cavalry, and our infantry the enemy’s infantry.”

The result of this knowledge of the country, at once intimate and practical, was, of course, that whoever fought him had not only as we have seen to meet him fully prepared, but also to fight him where he was perfectly at home.

The same fullness of knowledge extended to the procuring, handling and distribution of supplies. His early training as bookkeeper had doubtless made him efficient both as Quartermaster and as Commissary, and his experience in both departments many a time, no doubt, assisted him in caring for his men as he so loved to do.

In this connection it is pleasant to know that, familiar as he was with all arms of the service, and practically experienced in both staff departments, while visiting Europe in 1870 to observe the Franco-Prussian war he wrote back from Barleduc, France, then the Headquarters of the Prussian Army, most encouragingly of our service :

“ I therefore went back via Sedan to Brussels, then to Switzerland, Southern Germany and across to Vienna, then down to Hungary, then down the Danube

to Servia, Wallachia, and Bulgarian Turkey, visiting Bucharest the capital of Roumania, thence crossed the Black Sea to Constantinople. From Constantinople I visited Greece, from thence I went to Sicily, then up to Naples. On this trip I saw the soldiers of all these countries, saw much of the people, and was most politely and charmingly received everywhere, although not seeking anything of the kind, in fact avoiding it because I wanted as much personal liberty as possible so that I might see as much as I could in the short space of time I had given myself. I reached Rome on the evening of the 24th and will work my way back to Paris but not before the surrender. I do not know whether you will approve this trip of mine, but I never expect to see Europe again and could not resist the temptation to make it. I am fully satisfied that there is no nation in Europe which has so perfect an army system as ourselves; they have more perfect systems for raising troops, but I am satisfied their staff systems are not so good as ours.

"I will start home in the latter part of February if possible. I would like to visit St. Petersburg but am afraid I should not remain so long absent.

"I find that but little can be learned here to benefit our service. We are far ahead in skill and campaign organization. Europe is far ahead of us only in the military organization that makes nearly every man a soldier, and the facility of that organization in quickly putting hundreds of thousands into the field. So far as organization for re-clothing, transportation of supplies, and general comfort of the troops, we are so far ahead as to make comparison almost ridiculous."

One other thing he knew, and knowing did. He knew the value of drill, and every considerable rest was utilized. His command, therefore, was not merely well fed, well clothed, well cared for; it also was well drilled.

These were the individual qualities, therefore, he brought as his own contribution to the work of each command he was entrusted with.

He knew how to care for his men in food and clothing, camps and drill ; he knew the country to be fought in and the forces and manœuvres of the enemy ; he knew his men also, and knew these things, all of them, as things are known, which one has worked at with strong sympathetic interest and is perfectly at home with. That sort of interest it is which makes a man spontaneously industrious, and all these were, of course, the fruits of industry. Among the glimpses of his West Point life is one of his window darkened at night with a blanket that he might pursue his studies after the lights were ordered out. It is written of Jeroboam that he was "a mighty man of valor." "And Solomon, seeing the young man, that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph." The wisdom of Solomon is supplemented by the inspiration of St. Paul, whose precept to all rulers is, "with diligence."

At a later day General Sheridan went with General Grant on a trip to Mexico. One of his staff officers tells me that he came back with knowledge enough of Mexico, its topography and geography, its people and their institutions, to have taken charge, if need be, of that country and intelligently governed it.

All these features of his varied information—his knowledge of the country in which at any time he fought, his shrewd selection of scouts, his knowledge of his men, his constant provision for their comfort when in camp, were but so many aspects of his own personal interest in the life that was around him. By all of these means that interest made victory easier, and gave him freedom from mistake, and larger range, and

quicker knowledge of the things that might, or must be done.

Behind these lay a higher quality that was the final feature of the man. It is not easy to pass confidently to this next and last essential of that character (for it was character) that gave him victory where defeat was natural, and so gave to his own worth the value of the difference between victory and defeat. It is not a merely imaginative exercise to discern how from the very first his earnest interest in the life at hand fostered at once this confidence and power. In the store and on the plains it had led (perhaps driven) him to know the things about him, and to make the knowing incidental only to the doing. The habit came with this of doing in a way that is akin to driving. The forward impulse thus became habitual, and brought with it an experience of decision. The habit of deciding what to do and doing it, needs only to be prepared by circumstances and tempered by unselfishness to grow to any opportunity. At Boonville, capture seemed to be inevitable; at Cedar Creek his army was already routed, when his famous ride brought him upon the field. Plainly, it was not any of the things he knew that chiefly gave him triumph over both of these emergencies. It was his keeping to that wondrous way that leads between the recklessness that does not think, and hesitancy that mistakenly regards disaster as a greater evil than default. It was this way of looking at things, and of thinking, which, at Boonville and at Cedar Creek, led him away from what might happen, and had happened, to where he saw only the things that might be done. The things he knew helped him, as I have said; the difference in each instance between

victory and defeat lay mainly in the fact that, instead of yielding to the backward impulse of the situation, he drove it with a forward impulse moving from himself.

For this he must first have been cool enough to think.

Napoleon says with regard to this :

The first quality of a General-in-Chief is to be cool headed, to estimate things at their just value ; he must not be moved by good or bad news. The sensations that he daily receives must be so closed in his mind that each may occupy its appropriate place. Reason and judgment are only the result of the comparison of well weighed ideas.*

I do not know how I can better express the truth as to the character of Sheridan in this regard than by quoting again from General Pope :

“ Before I came to know him by personal association I shared what was then (as I believe it is now with most of his countrymen) the opinion that he was simply an impetuous, reckless soldier, full of dash and gallant to the extreme of rashness, in short, simply a splendid specimen of a cavalry officer of the ‘ Murat ’ order.

“ There never was a greater mistake. Impetuous he was, certainly, but it was only impetuous execution of deliberate and well considered plans. In all his life he did not do any important act without careful consideration beforehand. Neither in civil administration in time of profound peace, nor in the roar and fury of battle, did he ever act except on well defined lines and clearly conceived purposes.”

His coming on the field at Cedar Creek after his ride from Winchester has often been regarded as a species of apocalypse, immediately succeeded by a rush and charge like the repulsion of a great wave by a rock ; and

* From a translation by Lt. Col. A. K. Arnold, U. S. A.

his careering down his line before the charge is spoken of as if that were the first thing he did and its essential feature. He himself says of his first appearance on the field :

“As I continued at a walk a few hundred yards further, thinking all the time of Longstreet’s telegram to Early: ‘be ready when I join you, and we will crush Sheridan,’ I was fixing in my mind what I would do.”

He says of himself a short time afterward, “I had already determined to attack the enemy from that line as soon as I could get matters in shape to take the offensive.”

His riding down the line did not occur to him until it was suggested to him by Major Forsyth. He says :

“Major Forsyth now suggested that it would be well to ride along the line of battle before the enemy assailed us, for although the troops had learned of my return, but few of them had seen me. Following his suggestion I started in behind the men, but when a few paces had been taken I crossed to the front, and, hat in hand, passed along the entire length of the infantry line ; and it is from this circumstance that many of the officers and men who then received me with such heartiness have since supposed that was my first appearance on the field. But at least two hours had elapsed since I reached the ground.”

Closely allied to this was that in him which brought about that neither being outnumbered, as at Boonville, nor cruel losses, as at Perryville, could drive him from the field he thought he ought to hold. “Before ceding victory, wait until it is snatched from you,” said Napoleon, “before retiring, wait until you are forced.” General Grant’s well-remembered letter to his father is to the same effect. He wrote to him from before Vicks-

burg that he did not think an army under him would often be defeated, for the reason that he should not accept the fact till the last hope was gone. The ground upon which Sheridan often and expressly puts this, is that the ground once lost must be recovered at the cost of lives of officers and men ; and that in war the only real compensation for the loss of life is victory. In this he shows again his old-time sympathetic interest in the life in which he was concerned.

The same view doubtless made him feel that the last results of victory must be gathered. I am told by Gen. Dodge, who knew both officers extremely well, that General Grant did not enjoy the willingness of General Sheridan to be relieved from his command at Corinth, and to go to General Rosecrans in Tennessee, and was not cordial towards him until at Mission Ridge he witnessed Sheridan's division, not merely carrying the ridge, but pressing the pursuit far in advance, and until stopped by night. All feeling then became supplanted by fixed admiration, so that when Halleck afterwards suggested Sheridan for Chief of Cavalry of the Army of the Potomac, it cost General Grant no effort to reply, "He is the very man I want."

It is pleasant to see that this earnestness was really humane. In his report to the Committee on the Conduct of the War, he says, doubtless with reference to the valley of the Shenandoah, "I do not believe war to be simply that lines should engage each other in battle, as that is only the duello part, a part which would be kept up so long as those who live at home in peace and plenty could find the best youth of the country to enlist in their cause (I say the best, for the bravest are always the best), and therefore do not regret the system of

living on the enemy's country. These men and women did not care how many were killed or maimed so long as war did not come to their door. But as soon as it did come in the shape of loss of property, they earnestly prayed for its termination. As war is punishment, and death the maximum punishment, if we can, by reducing its advocates to poverty, end it quicker, we are on the side of humanity." In the same spirit in 1886, he wrote to General J. B. Gordon with regard to a national home for disabled Confederate soldiers :

"It is not proposed by your communication, nor by the circular, that the Government should take any steps in this direction. Such private effort as is found best suited to the situation may, however, be made by every citizen. * * * It would give me great satisfaction to aid, in an humble way, the brave men who opposed us in battle."

How natural that a great soldier with this generous mind should forecast in heart the day when war shall be supplanted by the contests of opinion and the sympathies. At Philadelphia, in 1887, at the centennial of the signing of the Constitution, he gave his judgment of the large result to come from the progressive increase in efficiency of weapons.

"There is one thing that you should appreciate, and that is that the improvement in guns and in the material of war, in dynamite and other explosives, and in breech-loading guns, is rapidly bringing us to a period when war will eliminate itself ; when we can no longer stand up and fight each other in battle, and when we will have to resort to something else. Now, what will that 'something else' be? It will be arbitration. I mean what I say when I express the belief that if any one now present here could live until the next centennial he would find that arbitration will rule the world."

God grant he can see it then, from everlasting life !

It is not necessary to an estimate of Sheridan to catalogue or to delineate his triumphs, or to contrast his share or prominence with those of others in suppressing the Rebellion. The battles of the Opequan (or Winchester) and Fisher's Hill, and Cedar Creek, his career in the Valley of the Shenandoah, these are familiar history. Of the close of the war it is enough to recall that it was he who rode on the 30th of March eight miles through rain and mud knee deep to dissuade General Grant from letting rain and mud prevent the forward movement from commencing that same day. April 2, three days later, at Dinwiddie, his command, on the right and rear of Lee's Army, had cut off from that army Pickett's command, amounting almost to an army corps, and had at the same time cut off Lee from Richmond and compelled him to leave Petersburg. April 6, three days later, at Sailor's Creek he had further depleted Lee's Army by the capture of Ewell's Corps, making prisoners six generals and nine or ten thousand men with the further attempt of cutting off Lee's attempted retreat via Danville, so that the Lynchburgh route alone remained by which Lee might retreat before the Army of the Potomac in his front. All day the eighth of April his command was moving parallel with Lee's retreating columns and dashing in where opportunity appeared. The forays of the day gave him large captures, and night found him in advance of Lee's retreat, at Appomattox Station, in possession of Lee's supply trains and astride the Lynchburgh Railroad. All night long General Ord, with the Army of the James, and General Griffin with the Fifth Corps, were hurrying to his aid. The day of Appomattox dawned upon Ord's troops just coming

into line behind the cavalry of Custer. Lee made his last attack upon that cavalry, and as they separated to the right and left disclosing that the Lynchburgh road was held not by themselves alone, but by the Army of the James in force behind them; the struggle ended and Lee's flag of truce appeared in front of Custer's lines. To claim for this more than the simple facts and their necessary incidents of personal character and endeavor would be false to the memory of Sheridan, because so unlike him.

To relate his public services immediately following the War would be as much beyond my scope as to recount his victories. His task of bringing back to civil order and to real union, States which had not laid down the rebellion but had merely laid down their arms, his wise and energetic firmness, the wrath of Andrew Johnson and his recall of Sheridan, these are a part of public history. His first contact, however, in New Orleans with the White League, then in control of Louisiana and determined on political control, brought out at once his courage and his kindliness and on the new stage of civil life disclosed once more the value of his personal character to any cause he was connected with. The evening of the very day of his arrival at New Orleans a violent meeting, under the auspices of the White League, was held in the rotunda of the St. Charles Hotel. A stage had been improvised of drygoods boxes, and from this the orator addressed the mob, seeking to inflame their minds to the point of resistance to the "bloody Sheridan." The uproar penetrated to the rooms occupied by the General, and was notice to him that he had a difficult and dangerous task before him.

He said quietly he would like to take a look at the mob, and he believed he would go and get a segar. Taking a small rattan cane, and telling Colonel Forsythe to put a pistol in his pocket and follow him, he started for the office of the hotel. As he slowly descended the great stairway, the most violent of the orators was denouncing the Union General and calling upon his hearers to resist and thwart him. Suddenly some of those below caught sight of the compact figure on the stairs, and taking in its humorous aspect began to laugh. The orator, disturbed by the movement, looked round for the cause, and following the direction in which all eyes were turned, he, too, saw the General approaching with great deliberation, and leaping from the platform he fled from the hotel. ~~and fled from the hotel.~~

My informant, and other leaders were greatly alarmed for the safety of the General, and as he made his way through the crowd they surrounded him to protect him from the more reckless spirits, well knowing that an assault on the representative of the Government would lead to the destruction of the State. Sheridan, unconscious of this attention, made his way to the segar stand, and, having bought and lighted a segar, turned quietly round and surveyed the excited crowd with the most perfect composure. This display of cool courage worked an instant revolution. The leaders of the League directly addressed the General, and, expressing their admiration of what they had just witnessed, said frankly that they would like to confer with him with a view to reach a peaceful settlement.

"Come to my rooms, gentlemen," said Sheridan, and, leading the way, he was soon pointing out to them the futility and danger to society of violent resistance

to law. They discussed the situation far into the night, and did not separate until a plan had been formed, in which all acquiesced, for restoring order: "That display of courage," said my informant, "compelled instant admiration and confidence, and saved Louisiana from the horrors of a bloody strife."

A less familiar episode, but of enormous consequence, came later. In monarchical Europe the breaking out of our Rebellion was seized upon as the downfall of self-government.

The greatest of English historians did not hesitate to formally entitle a work as "A History of Federal Government from the foundation of the Achaian League to the disruption of the United States,"* and the Emperor of Charlatans, Napoleon the Little, full of the same faith, undertook to supplant the Republic of Mexico with a pseudo-empire, resting on a corps of the French Army, appropriately commanded by Bazaine. The natural sympathy between this enterprise and the Rebellion made them at once, in utter violation of all neutral rights, reciprocal allies in everything but open war. The Rio Grande River and the ports of Mexico became the field of large exchanges of Confederate cotton for arms, munitions and supplies, such as materially strengthened the rebellion and prolonged the war. No one more fully realized this than General Grant. As early as when General Sherman came to City Point, and General Sheridan was also there, the course of the French was denounced as having made the war in Mexico inseparable

* Vol. I. was published in 1863. The second has not yet appeared

from the Rebellion, and the French in Mexico our enemies in everything but open war. It is pleasant to know that this righteous indignation was eventually the means of driving out the French and of reviving the Republic.

In the summer of 1865, the party of free government in Mexico was overthrown and scattered, the Monarchists apparently supreme, and Maximilian travelling through his empire regulating the new social institutions.

In the meantime, however, Sheridan, in Texas and at New Orleans, had closed out the Rebellion. On the 25th of July, 1865, General Grant wrote to him confidentially as follows, with regard to the French in Mexico :

* * * I have written my views to the President and had conversation with him on the subject. In all that relates to Mexican affairs he agrees in the duty we owe to ourselves to maintain the Monroe doctrine both as a principle and a security for our future peace. On the Rio Grande, or in Texas, convenient to get there, we must have a large amount of surrendered ordnance and ordnance stores, or such articles accumulating from discharging men who leave these things behind, without special orders to do so, send none of these back, but rather place them convenient to be permitted to go into Mexico, if they can be got into the hands of the defenders of the only government we recognize in that country.

It is a fixed determination on the part of the people of the United States, and I think myself safe in saying, on the part of the President also, that an *Empire* shall not be established on this continent by the aid of foreign bayonets. A war on the part of the United States is to be avoided, if possible ; but, it will be better to go to war now, when but little aid given to the Mexicans will settle the question, than to have in prospect a greater war, sure to come if delayed until the Empire is established.

We want then to aid the Mexicans without giving cause of war between the United States and France.

Between the would-be Empire of Maximilian and the United States, all difficulty can easily be settled by observing the same sort of neutrality that has been observed towards us for the last four years.

* * * With a knowledge of the facts before you however, that the greatest desire is felt to see the Liberal government restored in Mexico, and that no doubt exists of the strict justice of our right to demand this, and enforce the demand with the whole strength of the United States, your own judgment gives you a basis of action that will aid you.

* * * * *

Sheridan's personal memoirs show that he was already hard at work. He began by arresting a large migration of the ex-Confederates, whom the whole South was encouraging to join the forces of Maximilian. Troops were next gathered on the Rio Grande, and formal communication opened there with Juarez, and scouts were sent to ostentatiously inquire what supplies Northern Mexico could furnish to the forces under Sheridan. The direct effect of all this was that the French withdrew from Northern Mexico. The Liberals flocked in and there reorganized their army. Then cannon, small arms and ammunition enough in all, perhaps, for fifty thousand men were carelessly left by Sheridan along the Rio Grande, where the Liberals yielded to temptation and helped themselves at will. The Minister of France at Washington protested vigorously with just the same result that our protests achieved while yet the French in Mexico were helping the rebellion. The Liberals and the Monroe doctrine were too much for them, and the Republic rules in Mexico to-day revived by the United States in partial compensation for the war of 1846.

Two or three matters themselves far from incidental, can receive only incidental mention.

It goes without saying that a sympathy so earnest, always exacting of itself results, produced a character that rose above mere common honesty to high integrity of purpose. When he came East to the field of war from Oregon, his first assignments were as Quartermaster and as Commissary, in Missouri, and he came at once in contact with the pecuniary contaminations which at that time and place affected the supply departments of the army. With him, to come in contact was to come in conflict with them, and the speedy result was his summary removal out of that military department. When after the war he was sent to New Orleans and a subservient countenance of dishonest methods was required of him, in a protest which this drew from him with reference to the conduct of Governor Wells, he wrote to the Secretary of War, "I say again that he is dishonest, and that dishonesty is more than must be expected of me." Ten years afterwards he wrote to General Sherman from Chicago :

I am and have always been faithful in thought and word to my lawful commander—even independent of the warm personal friendship and admiration I have for you. I have been repaid for all this by fairness in the exercise of your authority, and by reciprocal friendship. * * * I have built up my present division, have been connected with the great development of the country west of the Mississippi River by protecting every interest so far as in my power, and in a fair and honorable way, without acquiring a single personal interest to mar or blur myself or my profession.

When he wrote of himself that at the beginning of the war he was desirous of opportunity but not dreaming of high rank, for he stated the whole truth. When in May, 1862, he was appointed Colonel of the Second Michigan Cavalry, some one expressed to him

the hope that the star of a brigadier was not distant in point of time. His reply was, "No, I thank you; I am now a colonel of cavalry, and have all the rank I want." Repeatedly afterwards he submitted without complaint to withdrawal of troops from his immediate command and to subordination of himself without any of those resulting quarrels which so often embittered the co-operating forces on either side during the war. In one instance this evoked a spontaneous tribute even from the taciturnity of General Grant. In the Valley of the Shenandoah Sheridan had been supreme. Flushed with the victories of the Opequan, of Fisher's Hill and Cedar Creek, still when his work was done he at once moved his army eastward to join the Army of the Potomac. General Grant met him with the remark that it was not often that an army commander would let go in that way his independence, adding that he should not suffer for it. A little army was made up for him consisting of the cavalry, and other troops from time to time assigned to him by General Grant. With this he compassed all his share in what was done thereafter.

Having heard both General Grant and General Sherman speak freely with regard to his relieving General Warren, I may say that each expressed the same clear recognition both of the necessity and what created it. A caution that amounted to a want of faith in his superiors repeatedly led General Warren to reply to a command to move, with a demand to be assured that his flanks were protected, or that other duties incident to giving the command had been performed. More than once the delay thus arising resulted in a loss of the desired result amounting to a virtual disobedience in a gallant, skillful officer and noble, excellent man. General

Sherman is my authority in saying that at Spottsylvania General Grant had this experience with General Warren in a way that fixed in his own mind a sense of the necessity of acting at once upon any similar occasion, and that led him in advance of that occasion to give General Sheridan authority to do as he afterwards did just after Five Forks. General Grant, indeed had said to General Warren, "Warren, I think you ought to trust me for a few things." Sheridan's command was exposed to the whole of Lee's army. What was at once rapid and rash might be required of him at any moment and the fate of his command turn on its instant execution. He had to choose between the situation and the man. He never spared himself in such a choice. In his whole life there is nothing to show that he at any time mistook his personal resentment for a sense of duty.

This little grouping of facts has disclosed to us how a strenuous and sympathetic interest in any life with which he was concerned, by reason of its being strenuous enough to bring him to the outcome of results, first made a lad of fourteen busy and intelligent, and so both valued and respected. Next, how that self-same sympathetic interest, always pushing to the outcome, carried him into the service of his country and there qualified him with accomplishments which gave him personality and with confidence that gave him force. How the same feeling that so made him one with all the life about him made him true to all of it, and how this truth and skill and confidence wrought out the life that brings us here for its commemoration. All these progressive glimpses of that life have shown no trace of fault not overcome. Let me say here with regard

to *nil de mortuis nisi bonum* that the great men of antiquity from whom that adage emanated were not fools nor insincere. Life is a process of assimilation, whether it be the life of consciousness or physical. When the loved and admired have left us, and we gather in commemoration, that is but a seizing back from death of so much as we may before he has it safe in his deposit of oblivion. What we thus seize we store within ourselves, and influenced by it grow in our degree into its like. A second value then has come to it, in that our dead now lives again in us, the highest tribute gratitude and love can pay. What shall we seize from death, then, but that which is good? What image shall we build of a dead friend in our own lives except an image of him at his best, and stripped of everything which he would willingly have dropped? The men who made the maxim knew the grace of life that might be kept from death, and the new life that love could give the good things of the dead. This life that we have studied offers opportunity to say these things without embarrassment, because it was—no, let me say it is—so fit to follow. A life that acted out its kindly sympathies, and proved that only this, done mightily and with judicious balance of all rights, is necessary to the character that rises to all needs—and if need be can handle armies or secure a pony for a boy—can retain equally the love of a charming family and of this great nation; this is the life, that in its death, may plead for other dead that only good may live concerning them.





